

DAN O'REILLY

March 16, 2021

Chair Wayne Emmerson and Councillors
Regional Municipality of York Region
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

Dear Chair Emmerson and York Region Councillors,

RE: Highway 413

As a founding member of the Humber Valley Heritage Trail Association and the first president of its Bolton Chapter, I am requesting York Regional Council pass a motion to oppose Highway 413 and support a full federal environmental assessment at its March 18th meeting.

Unlike the position taken by the Region in its March 3, 2021 letter to the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada that the, *“provincial EA process provides for the highest level of environmental assessment and stakeholder consultation,”* the facts prove otherwise.

The provincial government’s zeal in applying no-appeal Ministerial Zoning Orders to fast-track the building of warehouses and Walmart stores on wetlands, plus its undercutting of the regulatory powers of conservation authorities raises fears a provincial-only assessment would be deeply flawed.

Taking a strong stand against Highway 413 would demonstrate leadership by York Region and would send a crystal clear message to the province that a destructive mega-highway is neither needed nor wanted by the vast majority of residents in the municipalities the highway would cut a destructive path across.

The highway would have a particularly devastating impact on the Nashville Conservation Tract, the large conservation area in northwest Vaughan which is the site of the Kleinburg portion of the heritage trail at Huntingdon Road and the Kirby Sideroad.

It would dismember the conservation area, destroy or seriously degrade wildlife habitat and migration corridors, end any hope of connecting the Bolton and Kleinburg sections of the heritage trail, and possibly accelerate development pressures on the remainder of the conservation area. A decades-old vision of a Humber Trail extending all the way from downtown Toronto to Bolton would be killed.

But the devastation wouldn't stop there. The highway would pave over farms, forests, wetlands, other portions of the Greenbelt and have injurious impacts on the small headwater streams which feed the Humber, West Humber, Etobicoke, and Credit Rivers.

As well, it would slice municipalities in half, facilitating sprawling warehouse and housing developments on both sides of the highway corridor.

It's not quite clear how construction of the highway would be financed. There has been speculation it would be a toll road. But that doesn't take into account the sewer, water, and other required infrastructure needed to service that development.

And why is there is need for a second toll road, when one already exists in the form of the underutilized Highway 407? York Region, working in consultation with Halton and Peel Regions, should launch discussions with the trucking industry on how to lobby the province for a subsidy, or even a 100-per cent rebate to encourage truckers to use that highway more often. A rebate program would be expensive, but considerably less expensive than building a totally unnecessary new highway.

Having a subsidized dedicated truck lane was one of a number of strategies put forth by a panel of experts, whose conclusions on the minimal benefits of Highway 413, led to the cancellation of the project by the previous Liberal government.

The argument that Highway 413 is needed to service growth is representative of out-of-date land-use planning and transportation policies which encourage sprawl-based development. Growth can be accommodated through improvements in existing neighbourhoods, making more efficient use of undeveloped greenfield lands already designated or identified for development, and better transit planning and financing.

Instead of throwing away an estimated \$6 to \$10 billion on an ill-conceived mega-highway, taxpayer dollars should be more wisely invested in improving public transit, such as the Region has been doing with its VIVA rapid bus transit system, and the building of new GO train lines.

Halton Region, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Orangeville, the City of Mississauga, the City of Vaughan and—just last week—Peel Region have all come out against Highway 413. York Region should follow their lead.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,

Dan O'Reilly